



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

PRACTICABILITY OF AN AMERICAN FOREST
ADMINISTRATION.

BY B. E. FERNOW, CHIEF OF FORESTRY DIVISION.

The absence of forest management in the United States could, like many other social and economical conditions, existing or absent in this country, be explained by the fact that a proportionately small population was spread over a large territory, a condition which made it possible to cull new territory, rich in virgin forest resources, without the necessity of re-productive management. Such management could hardly become profitable as long as competition with the accumulated product of the unmanaged timberlands had to be met. The community alone might value the more indirect and distant benefits, which result from the management of the forest areas; hence the desirability of communal ownership and administration of such forest areas, the value of which lies less in their material than in their position and influences, such management having in view not profits, but maintenance of conditions. The timberlands still in the hands of the United States Government are mainly of this character, and need a conservative administration to maintain and improve present conditions.

The practicability of such an administration was discussed by referring to a bill, drafted by the Speaker and now before the Public Lands Committees, which provides for the reservation of the remaining Government timberlands, not of agricultural use, regulates the sale of wood supplies under a series of licenses, which are to satisfy the various

needs of the resident population, namely the settler, the prospector, the local lumberman and those who carry on lumbering on a large scale, and lastly outlines a fully equipped organization to carry out the provisions of the law, protect against fire, theft and devastation, and superintend the proper manner of cutting so as to secure reforestation.

The objections to this legislation come partly from those who, by an efficient government control, would be cut off from a nefarious trade carried on under present conditions, and from those whose objections were based on principle and valid reasoning.

The first objection, on principle, is to government holding of land in general, under the assumption that private interest is better fitted to take care of lands. This was, from experience, shown to be a mistaken position, and especially in the case of timberlands.

Next, the question as to what part of the community should own these lands was discussed, and while it was admitted that the town, county or State was most closely interested, and, therefore, ultimately best entitled to guard their interests, expediency for the present was in favor of retaining the timberlands in the hands of the general government, provided the general government would do what is necessary to preserve and keep this property in permanent forest.

The only real difficulty was not in devising practicable measures, but in getting men to execute them. Again imaginary or disingenuous, as well as *bona fide* and reasonable objections, were found to exist. The former were offered by those who consider government something outside and inimical to themselves, and every office-holder an enemy; therefore,

an increase of the number of office-holders a bane to the country, to be avoided at all hazards. This objection, the speaker thought, was, for a self-governing American, puerile to make, and was directed rather against present methods of filling offices than against a forest administration in special.

To do business it is necessary to employ efficient men, and to execute any laws such men must be not only sufficient in number, but clothed with necessary power; failures in the government business were always due to failure of proper regard to these three requisites.

The difficulty of finding men versed in forestry matters, it was admitted, would exist, but as it could not be expected to create at once a technically perfect management, the employment of a few expert advisers, who could be found, would permit the gradual development of a desirable system.

The question of cost of administration was briefly alluded to; this was computed at about five cents per acre, and it was shown that it would be easily covered from wood sales, even in the present stage of development.

While, then, the speaker concluded there could be no real objection raised to the practicability of a forest management of the Government's timberlands, he thought it would take at least two giants to carry any such legislation through Congress against the difficulties involved and the prejudices to be met in making any radical changes in the present land policy.